

AMENDMENTS TO THE DRAWINGS

The attached "Replacement Sheets" of drawings include changes to Figures 1 and 2.

The attached "Replacement Sheets," which include Figures 1 and 2, replace the original sheets including Figures 1 and 2.

Attachment: Replacement Sheets

REMARKS

Favorable reconsideration of this application, in light of the preceding amendments and following remarks, is respectfully requested. Claims 1-9 are now pending in the application. Claims 1 and 5 are amended. No claims have been canceled or added. Claim 1 is the sole independent claim.

The Applicants note with appreciation the Examiner's acknowledgement that all certified copies of all of priority documents have been received by the USPTO. Action Summary at 12.

OBJECTION TO THE DRAWINGS

On page 2 of the Office Action, the Examiner has stated the objection that Figs. 1 and 2 should be designated by the legend "Prior Art" because only that which is old is illustrated. Applicants disagree with this objection.

Figs. 1 and 2 have been amended to read "Conventional Art". In view of the foregoing discussion, withdrawal of the drawing objection is requested.

SPECIFICATION

The Specification stands objected to for certain informalities: page 7, line 5 recites H_2N_2 gas, which is not readily ascertainable. The Examiner's acknowledgement that H_2N_2 gas is meant to be read as a mixture of N_2 and H_2 gas is appreciated and N_2H_2 has been amended to read N_2/H_2 in order to overcome the Examiner's objection.

The specification is objected to as failing to provide antecedent basis for the claimed subject matter. The specification has been amended, and so the Examiner's rejections are moot.

Applicants hereby confirm their willingness to cooperate with the Examiner in the identification and correction of further minor errors within the specification. The Applicants

respectfully submit, however, that they are presently aware of any such errors that would require correction.

REJECTIONS UNDER 35 U.S.C. §112

Claims 1-9 stand rejected under 35 U.S.C. §112, second paragraph, as being indefinite for failing to particularly point and distinctly claim the subject matter which Applicants regard as the invention.

Claims 1 and 5 have been amended, and therefore the Examiner's rejections are now moot. Claims 2-4 and 6-9, dependent on independent claim 1, are patentable for the reasons stated above with respect to claim 1 as well as for their own merits.

Thus, Applicants respectfully request that the Examiner withdraw the rejection of claims 1-9.

REJECTION UNDER 35 U.S.C. §102

Claims 1-6 stand rejected under 35 U.S.C. §102(a) as being anticipated by Wang (U.S. Patent no. 6,409,932). The Applicants respectfully traverse this rejection for reasons detailed below.

Independent claim 1 recites an in situ baking step, wherein a silicon substrate having hard to soft photoresist layers is baked for a predetermined period of time under a pressure of 760 Torr while said silicon substrate is placed on a hot plate. Example non-limiting embodiments of this feature are discussed, for example, on page 5, line 24 through page 6, line 5 and Figure 3 of the instant specification. Wang, as relied upon by the Examiner, fails to anticipate or suggest an in situ baking step, wherein a silicon substrate having hard to soft photoresist layers is baked for a predetermined period of time under a pressure of 760 Torr while said silicon substrate is placed on a hot plate.

A silicon substrate is baked under a pressure of 760 Torr (Atmosphere Pressure).¹ When a gate valve of the chamber opens and a silicon substrate loads on the hot plate, the internal pressure of the chamber is generally at atmosphere pressure. Because in independent claim 1 a silicon substrate is baked under an atmosphere pressure, it is not necessary to decrease the internal pressure of the chamber for a baking process.

Wang discloses that the pressure in the process chamber is changed to an intermediate pressure (10 Torr ~ 700 Torr) between the load/unload pressure (atmosphere pressure) and treatment pressure (less than about 10Torr) for heating the wafer.²

An advantage of maintaining the pressure of the chamber at atmospheric pressure is that the process step of independent claim 1 is more simple to perform and the total process time is shorter.

Applicants, therefore, respectfully request that the rejection to claim 1 under 35 U.S.C. §102(a) be withdrawn for these reasons.

Claims 2-9, dependent on independent claim 1 are patentable for the reasons stated above with respect to claim 1 as well as for their own merits.

Accordingly, Applicants respectfully request reconsideration and withdrawal of the rejection to independent claim 1 and all claims dependent thereon.

CONCLUSION

In view of the above remarks and amendments, the Applicants respectfully submit that each of the pending objections and rejections has been addressed and overcome, placing the present application in condition for allowance. A notice to that effect is respectfully requested.

¹ Specification, page 6, lines 3-5.

² Wang, claim 1 and Fig. 6.

If the Examiner believes that personal communication will expedite prosecution of this application, the Examiner is invited to contact the undersigned.

Pursuant to 37 C.F.R. §§ 1.17 and 1.136(a), Applicants hereby petition for a one (1) month extension of time for filing a reply to the outstanding Office Action and submit the required \$120.00 extension fee herewith.

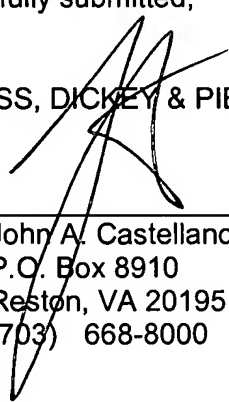
Should there be any outstanding matters that need to be resolved in the present application, the Examiner is respectfully requested to contact John A. Castellano at the telephone number of the undersigned below.

If necessary, the Commissioner is hereby authorized in this, concurrent, and future replies, to charge payment or credit any overpayment to Deposit Account No. 08-0750 for any additional fees required under 37 C.F.R. § 1.16 or under 37 C.F.R. § 1.17; particularly, extension of time fees.

Respectfully submitted,

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By:



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